

the japan times

The New York Times

Emergency declared in virus hot spots

Economic relief plan aims to boost safety net

Mild virus patients moved to Tokyo hotel

APR 15 INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS DAY

la Repubblica

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Resisti Milano

La vita a Milano è un inferno. Resisti. Milano è un inferno. Resisti. Milano è un inferno. Resisti.

WINDTRE

NATIONAL POST

1929 all over again

Alone on Parkway, but not lonely

Are we mortgaging our future on an insect science?

Call off the dog!

100 days of COVID-19: 1.1M infected, 81K dead

Yukubai starts accepting bookings to India, Pakistan

774000 FOG ZAKING CARE OF 62

JOHNSON STABLE IN ICU

PHYSICIAN: UKL retests 7-year-old German girl with family

Khaleej Times

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MANILA BULLETIN

PhilHealth rolls out ₱4.1 B COVID-19 fund

Benefit package for COVID-19 patients unveiled

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Benefit package for COVID-19 patients unveiled

INDIAN EXPRESS

Lost his mother, but continued to nurse patients

Just one patient can infect 406 in 30 days: Study

Two weeks, COVID-19 in TN, 70 fresh cases take tally to 691

China's ports help sustain supply chains, experts say

China's ports help sustain supply chains, experts say

China's ports help sustain supply chains, experts say

WASH YOUR HANDS! DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE!

COV-IDIOT

830

1525 ON ALL NETWORKS

de Volkskrant

Op naar het nieuwe normaal

150

NUMBER 1 SHIMBUN

The magazine of The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan

May 2020 Vol. 52 No. 5 ¥400

Reporting Covid-19 from Japan and around the globe

MILENIO

Con aval federal, Jalisco va por pruebas rápidas de covid-19

MANILA BULLETIN

PhilHealth rolls out ₱4.1 B COVID-19 fund

CHINA DAILY

Wuhan reopens after 76-day lockdown

Cooperation helps find solution to pandemic, officials say

China's ports help sustain supply chains, experts say

China's ports help sustain supply chains, experts say

THE ASIAN AGE

Lockdown likely to be extended, but gov't is yet to take final call

SIRs have curbed cases, 13 deaths in past 24 hours

India will export anti-malaria drug to US & others

China claims no new deaths, plans to lift curbs in Wuhan

ARAB NEWS

Iran 'hides 500,000 virus cases'

BBC broadcasts Muslim prayers on radio for the first time

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Warnings from pandemic playbook trigger questions about preparedness

DAILY NEWS

Deadliest day so far for county

DAILY NEWS

Deadliest day so far for county

The New York Times

BLACK AMERICANS BEAR THE BRUNT AS DEATHS CLIMB

President's Chief of Staff says 'We're not going to let anyone die'

Wuhan reopens after 76-day lockdown

DAWN

Virus situation can worsen in coming days: PM

IHC asks NAB for report in housing scandal case

Pakistan stays away from UNHCR, excepting headed by India

Global economy savaged by virus as markets crash in Europe, US

THE STRAITS TIMES

Singapore sets aside \$60 billion for fight against virus: DPM Heng

THE IRISH TIMES

Doctors fear surge of cases as intensive care nears capacity

Breakfast on Pluto

A NEW MUSICAL

Vanguard

COVID-19 alarm: Infection now at community level — FG

OPOVO

MÉDIA POR HABITANTES

Fortaleza é capital com maior taxa de Covid-19

Com 3,2 óbitos por mil e 100 mil notificações, cidade registra o maior número de mortes. Taxa de contaminação no Estado, 1,05 por mil. Confira: [veja em detalhes](#)

The Guardian

The lives cut short

1929: their lives be known

The Royal Gazette

Burt: 700 could die

Liberation

MERCİ

Family fun

Colouring in competition

Help and hope

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No. 1 SHIMBUN ONLINE

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS INFO



FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Fellow Members,

I would like to thank the staff, the management, our vendor Bplan, committees, and the Board for doing their best to maintain limited operations at the Club at this time when Japan is trying to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

While this crisis forced us to downsize our activities, it also gave us the chance to hold remote press conferences. With the management and members' help, the staff—both on the spot at the Club as well as those working from home—succeeded in providing chances for members to hear speakers and even ask them questions live.

I have been coming to the Club regularly and have seen journalists and other members coming to have a quick meal at the Bar. The Library, with the staff at reduced hours, and the open work room are also supporting journalists and members who visit for reporting and gathering news and information.

I think our Club stands out as a supporter for the media at this critical time when journalism should not leave the information gathering process to the elements but be interactive in doing the job. The grand support by FCCJ members is what made this a reality, and I have not enough words to express appreciation.

With the logistic restrictions on information gathering, and with almost no press conferences being given, other than online, our Club has become more important to stay open and provide as much assistance to journalists to function effectively as possible.

I think our Club stands out as a supporter for the media at this critical time when journalism should not leave the information gathering process to the elements

I have to admit it was difficult to reach balanced decisions on matters such as keeping the Club semi-open despite strong suggestions to shut it down.

I am hoping the Professional Activities Committee continues to expand the speakers' program, and that other committees follow, such as holding Book Breaks and whatever can be done online. I am also planning to hold a few President Forums for limited numbers of attendants with live streaming.

I can't stress enough the importance of the Club maintaining as many professional activities as possible. The global economy seems to be collapsing around us and we need to be in the center of reporting on that, and facilitating the efforts of our members.

We will move forward and possibly even hold remote music concerts on Saturday night for our members who have trouble getting into Tokyo.

On House and Property issues, the committee is working with the office to contact newspapers in Tokyo to resume sending us their Extra Editions of breaking news. We used to have that at the FCCJ reception at the good days of Denki building, when Club members could pick up a copy at the reception for free.

Furthermore, we plan to restore members' book sales at the FCCJ reception desk. At the Denki building, Club members could sell copies of their books at the Club reception desk with a 20 percent commission for the Club.

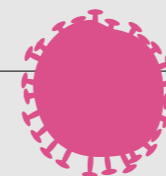
Restoring the bulletin board of press conferences, private ads, and events, etc. is also under discussion. At the Denki building, we had bulletin boards for that near the reception and the elevator. They displayed notice of press conferences by the political parties and business federation, companies, embassies, etc. This was useful for Club members, particularly freelance journalists.

Have a Golden Week.

– Khaldon Azhari

FREEDOM OF THE PRESS

Coronavirus and global press freedoms



Regimes using coronavirus as an excuse to attack press

New Statesman, March 25

China's Media Censorship Could Have Cost Thousands of Lives

Newsweek, March 25

Coronavirus is being used to suppress press freedoms

Axios, March 31

Coronavirus leads to violations of media freedoms in Egypt

Middle East Monitor, April 2

Coronavirus Consequence: Crackdown on Press Freedom World-Wide

Wall Street Journal, April 2

The coronavirus crisis has made press freedom, in Hong Kong and elsewhere, more vital than ever.

South China Morning Post, April 2

Hungarian journalists fear coronavirus law may be used to jail them

The Guardian, April 3

How press freedom is being threatened by the coronavirus

Reuters, April 7

Is the coronavirus killing press freedom in Africa?

DW Akademie, April 8

Press freedom violations throughout Africa linked to Covid-19 coverage

RFI, April 14

Journalists threatened and detained as countries on multiple continents restrict coronavirus coverage

Washington Post, April 16

When Freedom of the Press is Stricken with the Coronavirus

The Wire, April 16

Coronavirus Pandemic: 10 Urgent Threats to Press Freedom

Time, April 17, 2020

Coronavirus: RSF concerned for freedom of the press as Japan declares state of emergency

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) urged the Japanese government to exclude the media from the list of companies and associations that could receive its instructions under the state of emergency and asked for a revision of the law to guarantee press freedom at any time.

As a result of the coronavirus pandemic, the Japanese government declared on April 7 a state of emergency for most of the country, putting into effect its special-measures law that entitles the government to give "instructions" to a number of designated companies and associations listed on its website, including public broadcaster NHK. Many have raised concerns that the ambiguous formulation of the law could be interpreted as an authorization to infringe on the media's editorial independence.

RSF urged Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to remove NHK from the designated list and ensure that no other media are added. RSF also asked the Japanese lawmakers to modify the emergency law with due haste to make it fully compatible with the Japanese constitution and the Japanese Broadcasting Act, both of which guarantee press freedom.

"When confronted with a public health crisis, independent information concerning measures taken by the authorities and the steps recommended to limit the spread of the epidemic are indispensable to the public," said Cédric Alviani, RSF East Asia bureau head, who urges the Japanese government "to fully ensure media's editorial independence and act with transparency."

On March 15, the Japanese Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare apologized for posting inaccurate content on Twitter. Another false tweet also posted on March 5 was aimed at attacking the TV Asahi's news report on coronavirus.

Since Shinzo Abe took office as prime minister in 2012, many journalists have complained about a climate of mistrust and hostility coming from the government, which has tried on several occasions to interfere with the media's editorial independence, including NHK.

UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression David Kaye has expressed serious concerns about freedom of the press in Japan in 2017 and noted a further erosion of freedom in 2019.

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Oracle of women's rights



Beate Sirota Gordon speaks at the Club on Sept. 21, 1998, following the publication of her English-language memoir, *The Only Woman in the Room*. That memoir described her contribution to Japan's postwar constitution: Article 14 on basic human rights and Article 24 on basic gender equality. Seated to her left is Bob Neff (Business Week) and to her right is Bruce Dunning (CBS).

Gordon was born Beate Sirota in Vienna, Austria, in 1923. At age five, she came with her parents to Japan, where her father, a noted pianist, had been invited to teach. Following her early education at German and American schools in Tokyo, she left Japan in 1938 to continue her education at Mills College in the US, where she obtained a degree in modern languages. Multilingual (six languages), she put her fluency in Japanese to work for the US government during WWII and in 1945 joined the Occupation forces in Japan. During that time, she worked as an interpreter for high-level negotiations with the Japanese government, making her a "witness to history," as well as participating in the drafting of the new constitution.

In 1948, Gordon returned to the US and married Joseph Gordon, and within five years became director of performing arts for the Japan Society in New York. From 1970 to 1991 she served in a similar role for the Asia Society. Although she was long reluctant to publicly discuss her involvement in writing Japan's constitution, word of her contribution had become public knowledge by the 1990s. In 1996 she began to speak both in Japan and the US about her historical role in the Occupation. She penned her memoir in 1995, with the English version becoming available in 1998.

Gordon was honored with many awards both for her work with the Occupation and as a cultural bridge in the performing arts between the US and Japan. These included the Order of the Sacred Treasure from the Japanese government in November of 1998 following her appearance at the FCCJ. A long-time resident of New York City, she passed away in December of 2012.

– Charles Pomeroy
editor of Foreign Correspondents in Japan,
a history of the Club that is available at the front desk

Needed, yet mistreated: the plight of foreign trainees

A visit to a shelter for abused members of Japan's Technical Trainee program, which invites workers from other parts of Asia to bolster the country's declining work force

By Sonja Blaschke

Even a year after the last operation, one can still see the deep, deforming scar on Nguyen Ba Man's thumb. The memories of his recovery are painful. "It was snowing. When I tried to leave the house, the pain grew stronger. I called the trainee organization, asking them to take me to the hospital, but nobody came," said Nguyen. "Eventually, I had to remove the stitches myself."

Nguyen is 22 years old, friendly and unassuming. He is sitting on a futon in a cramped shared room at a shelter for trainees in Hashima, a nondescript town of 68,000 in Gifu prefecture northwest of Nagoya. Its most prominent feature is its Shinkansen station, which connects the small and midsize suppliers in the area with Japan's economic centers. On his crossed legs lay a Japanese textbook and a notebook with handwritten Chinese vocabulary. Nguyen's goal: 150 new words every day. His rosé-colored sweatshirt read "Count your blessings"—which could well be his motto.

The scar will keep reminding him of three years in his life which turned out quite different from what he had anticipated when applying to become a Technical Trainee in Japan. After he sustained a severe work-related injury seven months into his stint, his employer pressured him to return to work early, resulting in the wound repeatedly splitting open. To make matters worse, the brake company even burned his personal belongings when he left for a third operation, assuming he would not return. And Nguyen's experience is far from being a singular, isolated case.

Japan has been trying to combat the increasing lack of workers since the early nineties with the Japanese Industrial Trainee and Technical Intern Program, especially in fields requiring manual labor—like agriculture, seafood processing and textile production. In 2019, there were about 330,000 foreign trainees, accounting for one quarter of all foreign employees in Japan.

Were it not for the coronavirus pandemic, this figure would have kept rising. However, travel restrictions have caused some potential trainees to be unable to leave home, with the result that Japan is now facing a shortage of about 1,000 trainees in the agricultural sector alone, according to the agriculture ministry. Some 400 of them were to work for

Nagano lettuce producers, for example, and now large parts of the crop might be left to rot in the fields.

Most foreign trainees are hired by small and midsize enterprises (SMEs). Their absence can be critical, as a textile company operator in Fukui prefecture explained to Kyodo news agency. Of roughly 20 Chinese trainees, six were prevented from entering Japan due to the entry ban covering parts of China and elsewhere. "It may be just a few people, but for small and midsize businesses it means a significant drop in manpower," said an official at the company.

The spread of the virus also prevented some trainees from taking the skill tests required to renew their visas after their three-year training period to extend their stay up to the five-year maximum. Others who wanted to return home could not. So far, the immigration office has shown some flexibility, granting four-month visa extensions in mid-March.

The Technical Trainee program was ostensibly set up as a form of overseas development assistance to teach trainees skills which they would be able to use upon their return home. However, all they usually learn are a few simple steps, and sometimes the industry does not even exist in their home countries. The program has enabled the conservative government to curry favor with right-wing supporters by inviting cheap manual workers, while renouncing any intention to allow proper immigration.

MODERN SLAVERY?

Critics call it modern slavery and human trafficking, rather than training. Even before they leave home, trainees have to pay the equivalent of several thousand dollars to agents. Once they are in Japan, their visa is tied to one specific employer—and some abuse this position by paying standard wages or changing workload arrangements to suit their own needs. Trainees have to pay rent and utilities for housing that is often shoddy. Some employers confiscate passports. There have been reports of sexual abuse, of pregnant women being let go long before maternity leave, or of being coerced into getting an abortion. While there have been an average of 200 to 300 reports of abuse in recent years, in 2018 the number dropped to a little above 100. (The estimated number of unreported cases is assumed to be much higher.) According to a study from 2016, three quarters of companies who



Given shelter
Nguyen Ba Man, who worked through multiple operations on his thumb, studying Japanese at the shelter.

employed trainees reportedly violated labor law.

As a result, several thousand trainees take flight every year. They either join the ranks of illegal immigrants,

or they ask trainee support groups for help. One such NGO is the Solidarity Network with Migrants Japan (SMJ) based in Tokyo, headed by Ippei Torii. He was given an award by the American State Department in 2013, as a "hero fighting for an end of modern slavery."

The shelter in Gifu is associated with SMJ and run by a Chinese-born lawyer who has spent several decades studying and working in Japan. Zhen Kai, a stocky 60-year-old, met Torii about ten years ago and turned a three-story building into a shelter. The ground floor houses the office of a local labor union which he runs. Zhen lives with his wife and son on the second floor, while the third floor accommodates a dozen foreign trainees from China, Cambodia and Vietnam. They stay there while they await results from applications for governmental support or from mediation and court cases.

Many have suffered both physically and mentally. In Nguyen's case, his injury was the result of an electric shock from the machine he was operating, possibly due to some miscommunication. A Chinese man sustained a severe eye injury when shucking oysters with a metal hook. A Chinese woman lost part of one finger at a farm when it got tangled up in a

rope; Another woman broke her back when she tried to jump to her death. The injury and death rate among foreign workers is far above the national average.

LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Among the biggest hurdles is the language barrier. A few weeks of token Japanese language courses are not enough to make inroads, and Japanese colleagues often show little understanding of the difficulties. After some initial attempts to help, they often withdraw, with the trainee ending up isolated and desperate.

That is what happened to 34-year-old Shi Jianhua, a quiet woman with short hair, who arrived in Japan in 2015. Shi hails from the mountains of Hubei province, a region now known worldwide as the origin of the coronavirus. Like many participants in the Technical Trainee program, she left behind two children and a husband to make money for their support. Before leaving home, she paid the equivalent of \$12,000 to pay for language classes and agent fees.

In Japan, she worked for a paper company as a quality inspector. In her first post, her superior insulted her every day, but she had the companionship of other trainees. In her second position, there were no more insults, but also no other trainees, and she was soon shunned by her Japanese colleagues. The harsh work environment also took its toll. "It was very loud and hot, with paper dust everywhere." And she was being paid less than half the promised ¥200,000 a month.



Working for recovery
Above left, Shi Jianhua, who attempted suicide because of her working conditions; lawyer and shelter organiser Zhen Kai; trainees working on the shelter's own farm.



Lucrative overtime work was only given to Japanese.

Two years into the job, frightened after a recent murder case involving trainees in the area, she asked to change from night to day shift. Her request was denied, and feeling that was the last straw, Shi jumped from the roof of the paper factory. She survived with a broken back and was hospitalized for four months. At the time of our interview, two years later, she was still receiving daily physiotherapy treatment and monthly sessions with a psychiatrist to treat depression.

In November 2017, a few months after Shi's suicide attempt, Japan introduced new laws making it a criminal offense for a company to refuse compensation payment after occupational accidents. Physical abuse can be punished with ten years' imprisonment or a fine of up to ¥3 million. Despite Zhen's efforts to mediate and negotiate, however, Shi's former company was refusing to take responsibility.

FATHER FIGURE

Most evenings, Zhen invites the trainees to the big table in his kitchen for dinner, often consisting of vegetables cultivated on their own little field 15 minutes away. Nguyen was lamenting the fact that trainees could neither select nor

change their assigned employer, nor did they have time to study. "We come here, and we lose our rights," he said quietly. He felt that it was easy for companies to mistreat them, knowing any lawsuit would be difficult during the short term of the program. He believes the government should do more to support trainees.

Japan has vowed to improve things, including stricter control of employers and adding more language classes. In April 2019, it also created a new government agency in charge of an additional program with the goal of attracting 345,000 foreign blue-collar workers with specified skills within five years. However, even before the coronavirus pandemic, the program was less than successful. By the end of last year, according to a *Japan Times* interview with the commissioner of the new agency, only 1,700 Specified Skilled Workers had been accepted. 10,000 more were supposed to sit exams by the end of March.

Despite all that had happened to him, Nguyen appeared to be neither angry nor bitter. He said he wanted to study business upon his return to Vietnam, to become a manager. In the meantime, he had decided to make the most of his time in Japan to study Japanese and Chinese, and possibly English. "The future will be better with foreign-language skills," he said. ●

Sonja Blaschke is a Japan-based German freelance journalist and TV producer.

Reporting in the age of corona

How journalists are managing the difficult task of covering Japan's response to the epidemic



RICHARD ATRERO DE GUZMAN

By Julian Ryall

We live—and work—in interesting times. Obviously, for members of the media profession, to be in the thick of a story from its very early stages and then to follow the personal stories and the political maneuvering, or to chronicle the ramifications for companies and sectors through to their conclusions, is why we get into this business.

The coronavirus pandemic is different, however, because we're not dispassionate observers and the job description means that we have to take arguably more risks than the average citizen going about their everyday life.

So just as in March 2011, when the earthquake off north-east Japan triggered a tsunami that devastated a swathe of Tohoku and set off a nuclear crisis, we are once again in the middle of the story.

In late December, the likelihood of a global pandemic that would infect close to three million people, so far, and kill more than 200,000 [both figures at press time] was unthinkable.

There were sketchy reports of an outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan of a previously unknown strain of a virus with similarities to the flu, but conventional wisdom was that it was nothing to be overly alarmed about.

Four months later, tens of millions of people are under lockdown and more people will die, from Boston to Barcelona to Beijing, before this thing has run its course. Reporting the coronavirus crisis has been, correspondents concur, "challenging."

"The first piece I wrote was on Jan. 29 and it was a short story about how people should protect themselves from this virus that was emerging in Wuhan," said Justin McCurry, correspondent for *The Guardian*. "But it all seemed very distant at that point."

EVEN UP UNTIL THE first cases were reported aboard the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship on Feb. 4, "My colleagues in London were still talking about this as if it was a north-east Asia prob-



YOSHIKAZUTSUNO



YOICHI YABE

Coronavirus ins and outs

Opposite: An empty departure lounge at Tokyo's Haneda airport on March 18, after a number of flight cancellations. Above: Pubs and restaurants organize outside eating and takeaways on April 11 to stay in business during lockdown.

lem as there had been only a couple of cases reported in the UK by that point, so they sent me a few masks," McCurry said. "But then within a very short space of time it was a serious matter in Europe as well."

For McCurry and many other correspondents, the *Diamond Princess* became ground zero for coverage. "When it was a story about middle-aged, middle-class British tourists trapped on a cruise ship, then the story took off," he said.

Social media and modern technology meant it was possible to reach passengers who were in quarantine, which was what news desks were demanding, and it was a story within an evolving narrative that made consistent and compelling copy for weeks on end. "It was something we could keep going back to and to hear how conditions on board were deteriorating, to see how people were going about sitting the thing out, to see their growing frustrations," said McCurry, who estimates he has written nearly 90 stories or contributions to rolling news blogs on the virus for *The Guardian*.

Abby Leonard also contributed her first coronavirus story on Jan. 29, when Japan began evacuating its citizens from Wuhan, and is reporting for National Public Radio in the US and *Time* magazine. The *Diamond Princess* was an important part of the larger story, primarily because there were so many US nationals on board and such "drama" about getting them home, she said, but the agenda has moved on significantly.

"There's so much news about this in the US now, it's harder to get anyone interested in what's happening in Japan," she said. "At the beginning, I think coronavirus felt like an Asian story to assignment editors, so we were well-positioned here in Japan. But, of course, that changed," she said. "In recent days though, with the uptick in cases, there's slightly more interest in whether it really takes a turn for the worse and how the Japanese government deals with that."

EDITORS ARE NOW LOOKING for stories with parallels to what the US is likely to experience in the weeks ahead, coverage of

second-wave infections, economic stories and how the government is managing—or mis-managing—the lockdown.

"The lack of information and questionable data are big challenges, and trying to put the numbers in context for a US audience is hard when you're not comparing apples to apples as far as testing rates and other metrics," said Leonard, who also has an added layer of complication to her job.

"It's been hard," she admits. "I have a 4-year-old, a 2-year-old and one on the way, so it's nearly impossible to do anything when they're around," she said. "And their school has been closed since the beginning of March."

"A lot of my work is radio reporting, which I record and edit

"AT THE BEGINNING, I THINK CORONAVIRUS FELT LIKE AN ASIAN STORY TO ASSIGNMENT EDITORS, SO WE WERE WELL-POSITIONED HERE IN JAPAN. BUT, OF COURSE, THAT CHANGED"

at home," she said. "I have let my 4-year-old son listen in on some of my recording sessions because he's really curious about what I'm doing, but it's hard for him to stay quiet for long stretches, so that's meant I have to do twice as many takes to get something usable. That can be frustrating—probably for both of us."

"I sort of feel like I have double deadlines—one from my editor and one from my kids—because they're out of school, they just demand so much of me these days, so it's really hard to carve out blocks of time to work," she added. "And I've had to turn down assignments because I just don't have the time to do it and also give the kids the attention they need. That's been frustrating—but obviously something parents around

the world are dealing with now."

Drini Kakuchi writes for the UK-based University World News and has been able to concentrate on longer reads, looking at the impact of the virus on the tertiary education sector in Japan. She says the biggest hurdle has been obtaining information.

"I have built up really good relationships with health experts, and that has meant that they have always been able to find time to speak with me, even if I call at midnight, so I really appreciate that," she said. "The problem has been company and business officials, bureaucrats, PR people who don't want to say anything in case it appears that they're not doing enough for their students."

KATHRYN WORTLEY, WHO REPORTS for Singapore-based TTG Asia, has had similar issues with recalcitrant spokespeople and government officials, making it difficult to get a firm grasp of the situation facing travel companies and the broader tourist sector in Japan. "I've definitely been given the run-around when I contact organizations or companies—because they're not happy to comment on what is still an unfolding situation," she said. "It's often hard [in normal times] to get officials, even PR people, to give you an answer to something that's fairly easy, so it's a hundred times worse now."

The best way of overcoming that hurdle, she has learned, is to cultivate as many new contacts as possible, get existing contacts to put in a good word with someone else in the industry who might otherwise be leery about speaking to an unknown foreign reporter and "just keep on my toes."

Abby Leonard says that in the same way that March 2011 taught us lessons we never knew we needed previously, the early months of 2020 are demonstrating a whole new set of needs—both in terms of journalists trying to do their jobs and society's need for the media to fulfill its duty.

"There is a need to question authority and push for more government transparency; [to accept] that explanatory jour-

nalism is hard and necessary; that it's important to have experienced foreign journalists in Japan to help explain what is really going on, on the ground," she said. "Also, that quality, available childcare is essential, and we need to find innovative ways to support working parents in times of crisis."

I, PERSONALLY, WOULD ECHO all these comments—but I'm still finding it difficult to get my head around how un-angry the Japanese public and media are at the situation the nation finds itself in. *The Telegraph* is a solidly conservative newspaper that was firmly in Boris Johnson's corner in last year's election, but it has still been sharply critical of mistakes and mismanagement in his administration's response to the coronavirus crisis in the UK. And rightly so.

But here, the front pages of the papers and the television coverage merely seem to parrot the government line. Where are the angry op-eds asking why just 11 percent of deaths merit autopsies and why, therefore, it appears that people who may have died of coronavirus are being listed as having succumbed to pneumonia? Why no outrage over the shortage of protective kits for emergency staff, hospitals turning away people who are clearly ill and, most obvious of all, the failure to test more than a fraction of the people?

After March 2011 and the failures that disaster laid bare in the way that the government talked down to the public and the media reinforced rather than rebutted that message, I had hopes that things might change in Japan. By the time the statistics on pneumonia deaths in the early months of 2020 are released—five months later, we are being told—any anger that might have resulted from inexplicably sharp spikes in the fatalities will have already dissipated.

So Japan moves on to the next crisis no better prepared and its politicians held no more accountable for their action or inaction than before. And we're left to live in hope. ●

Julian Ryall is Japan correspondent for The Daily Telegraph.



In the light of social distancing, this interview was conducted by Skype and Thomas took his self-portraits by computer.



Thomas Hahn *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

By Ilgin Yorulmaz

Thomas Hahn's days normally would be filled with chasing stories all over Japan, from the artisanal beer production in Akita Prefecture to Japan's national obsession with *baumkuchen* ("tree cake")—that fussy "king of cakes" native to his homeland, Germany. "For Europeans, Japan is a similar but at the same time a totally different country," he says.

Since 1999, Hahn has been a reporter and editor at *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Germany's largest selling broadsheet. He started at the sports desk and stuck to it for 15 years.

After a while, covering Olympic Games and world championships in athletics and nordic skiing was overcome by a need to do something a bit more substantial. In 2014, the Munich-born journalist switched to the politics beat, left Bavaria in the south where his appropriately named paper is based (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* literally means "South German Newspaper"), and moved to Hamburg as political correspondent for northern Germany.

SZ, as his paper is known in Germany, is characterized by its witty and opinionated kind of journalism, marked by a variety of critical columns: "I love *SZ*'s satirical tone as well as the out-of-box thinking of its writers, and I am certainly not one of their most talented writers," Hahn jokes.

When the post for a Japan and Korea correspondent became available after his predecessor and mentor Christoph Neidhart retired, Hahn applied, and moved to Tokyo in September 2019. At first his job allowed him to travel extensively in Japan while spending a week or two every month in South Korea.

The plan was to report on Far Eastern foreign affairs with a healthy dose of non-political Japan stories on the side, reflecting "a whole range of the society . . . like the elderly, and urban artists." These stories would be like a wisp of fresh air against the stuffy Japanese political backdrop. And come summer, he could even use his vast sports writing skills with the Tokyo Olympics.

JUST THEN A GLOBAL crisis hit Japanese shores and a single topic flooded the news: coronavirus.

Although Hahn is now chasing infectious disease scientists and Japanese health officials instead of Olympic record breakers and national sports teams, he may be one of the best journalists around to report on corona-related news for a very good reason. Between fall 1991 and summer 1992, Hahn worked as a nurse at the hospital in Fürth, a town that's a 90-minute drive away from Munich. He was 19 and, like many young conscientious objectors of his generation, he refused to go into the army, taking a civil service job instead. He ended up being employed at a hospital unit looking after cancer patients, alcoholics, and cardiac patients, among others.

That year had a massive personal impact and helped him develop a better understanding of what health means: "I saw what it looks like when people are dying. I figured how impor-

tant it is to cherish the healthy moments outside. I liked the job, and this feeling of relief after my shift, when I rode my bike back home feeling the air, seeing the trees, experiencing the freedom without sickness," he says. His words ring particularly true during this ongoing coronavirus pandemic, which has so far claimed the lives of nearly 200,000 people worldwide.

Germany is seen as a role model by the World Health Organization for its successful coronavirus mitigation and containment strategy of immediate lockdowns, cancellations of big events and massive daily testing of thousands of people in contrast to Japan's much softer approach and few tests.

At first, Hahn had trouble understanding and explaining to his readers why Japan was behaving so differently from other developed nations. The government's struggle with internal politics, lack of clear political guidelines, and in turn, the Japanese public's failure to understand the impending crisis surprised him.

HE THINKS PART OF the reason was the Olympics, which had a huge influence on the country's coronavirus response. "But the virus is a biological fact; it's not about politics," he says of the need to approach the crisis from a scientific point of view. "When politics and economic reasons are put before the public health, public trust flows away." And that is exact what seems to be happening in Japan.

Although both countries have similar administrative structures, he thinks German states came together faster to devise a common strategy and decide what the next steps would be. In Japan, with the exception of Hokkaido initially and Tokyo much later on, "decision making was not concise and understandable . . . and the public didn't feel the urgency," he observes.

Like many of us, Hahn doesn't like being confined to his apartment. He echoes a psychologist he interviewed for a story recently who advised against taking extreme measures. "I tried to change my daily routine as little as possible, but going to coffee shops, my favorite workplace, is out of the question," he laments.

A drama, history and communications major at university, he also turns to drawing during the confinement days. (His satirical cartoons can be seen on Instagram at @hahninger).

Although Hahn misses traveling around Japan, he still manages to squeeze into his daily dispatch to the *SZ* head office the kind of stories he likes to pursue. Among them is a recent story on the economic impact of vanishing tourism in Kyoto, which, before the coronavirus pandemic hit everywhere, had taken steps to tackle over-tourism and banned tourists from taking pictures in the city's geisha neighborhoods. It sounds like a fitting story for a paper whose writers celebrate the irony in everything. ❶

Ilgin Yorulmaz is a freelance journalist and a regular contributor to BBC World Turkish-language service.

Viral reports

Reporting—and trying to understand—the spread of Covid-19 dominated the news globally. While the news industry suffered threats of closure and staff furloughs like other industries, more and more people were getting their news online, even as online ad revenues plummeted. Here are some front pages of print editions from around the world—a glimpse of the coverage and its importance.



USA: World leader—in virus cases and unemployment, graphically represented on their broadsheet front page (March 27)



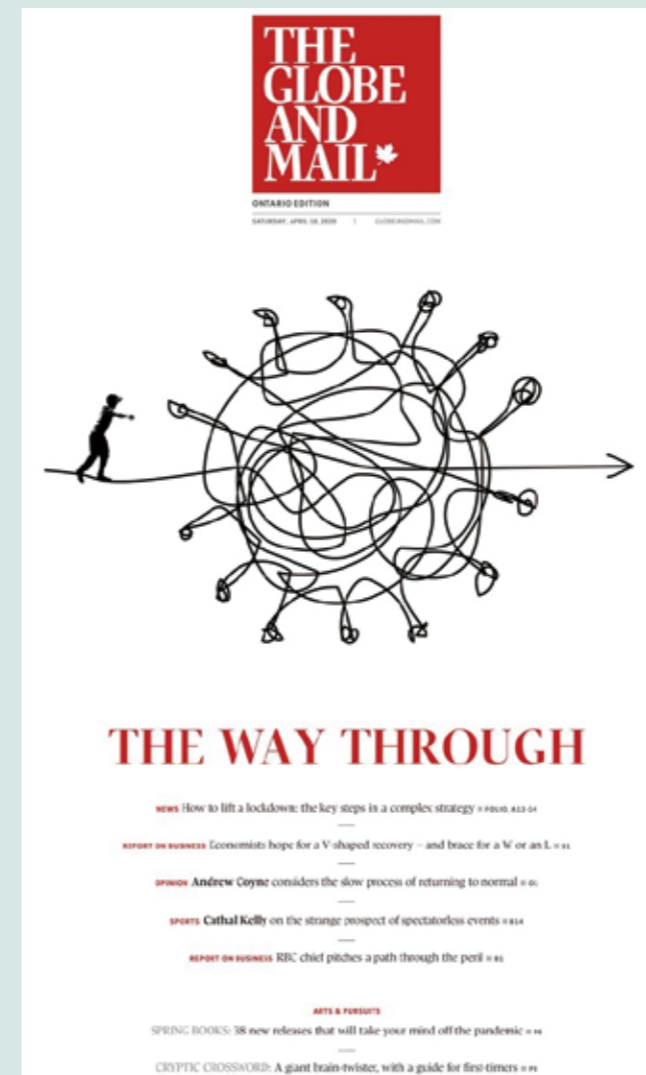
China: World leader in containment? (April 7)

To an extent that no one would have expected a month ago, Japan is the best place to be among any of the big industrialised nations, for the time being at least. It is difficult to explain and frankly difficult to believe in. As terrible news comes in from the rest of the world, Japan feels like a fairyland into which grim reality is liable to explode at any moment.

– Richard Lloyd Parry, *The Times* **March 24**



Japan: Emergency declared for a largely voluntary lockdown (April 8)



“In the first place, we managed to find the larger clusters and get them contained. But Japanese society is really poor at switching from Plan A to Plan B. We are poor at thinking about a plan B. Bureaucrats would rather complete the plan once laid,” [professor of infectious disease at Kobe University Hospital] **Iwata explained.**

– Asger Røjle Christensen, reporting Kentaru Iwata’s online appearance at the FCCJ, translated from the Danish in Ræson **April 20**



Dubai: Permits needed to leave home (April 6)

Canada: Routes to recovery from lockdown and its effects, in one of *The Globe and Mail's* striking front pages (April 18)



UK: PM taken to intensive care and a week in hospital (April 7)



India: Managing infection and country-wide lockdowns (April 13)



Germany: Looked to loosen lockdown and toward hope (April 12)

Disagreements between Koike and Abe over how far the emergency measures should go have quickly escalated since Tokyo's 14 million residents were asked to stay home earlier this week amid record numbers of new cases. "Asking for residents to use self-restraint and stay home is not enough," Koike said soon after Abe declared a state of emergency this week. "We should also restrict the use of cluster-causing facilities" such as restaurants and karaoke parlours, she said.

– Justin McCurry, *The Guardian*

April 9

Club News

NEW IN THE LIBRARY

Outcasts of Empire: Japan's Rule on Taiwan's "Savage Border," 1874-1945

Paul D. Barclay
University of California Press



The Japanese Linguistic Landscape: Reflections on Quintessential Words
Susumu Nakanishi; trans. by Ryan Shaldjian Morrison
Japan Publishing Industry Foundation for Culture (JPIC)

The Culture of Capital Punishment

David T. Johnson
Palgrave Macmillan
Gift from David T. Johnson

Make It Happen!: Japanese Companies Need to Elevate Marketing as a Core Function to Succeed Outside Japan

Robert E. Peterson
Gift from Robert E. Peterson

FCCJ EXHIBITION



Due to certain changes in the operations of the Club because of the declaration of emergency in Tokyo, **Torin Boyd's exhibition of the photographs of Stanley Troutman** (see last month's *Number 1 Shimbun*) has been extended to be shown throughout May.

NEW MEMBERS



REGULAR MEMBERS
Rodrigo Reyes-Marin is a freelance photojournalist and videographer who changed his membership from Professional/Journalist Associate to Regular. In 2004, he graduated in journalism from the Centro de Estudios Universitarios PART, and worked for various media in Mexico. He came to Japan in 2008 as a correspondent for the Mexican wrestling magazine *Luchas 2000*. He now contributes to the photo agency NipponNews (AFLO) and the US photo agency Zuma Press. His book *Mexicanos en Toronto*, was published in 2011.



Toru Shiraishi has held the post of foreign news section editor of *The Tokyo Shimbun/The Chunichi Shimbun* since August 2018. Shiraishi joined the Chunichi Newspaper Company in 1988, and has been working there ever since. For many years he worked as a writer of foreign news section in Tokyo. He was a correspondent in Shanghai from 1998 to 2001, and in Beijing from 2005 to 2007 and from 2013 to 2015, where he covered Chinese politics, economics and society.



Kantaro Suzuki is a freelance reporter based in Tokyo. He holds degrees from Wittenberg University in Ohio and Waseda University. He was a news assistant in Tokyo at *The New York Times*, and part of the team covering the Fukushima nuclear disaster that was one of the finalists for the 2012 Pulitzer Prize. He has also worked on stories for ProPublica (on casino-building in Japan), BuzzFeed, *Aera* and other publications. He worked on the *Daily Manila Shimbun* in the Philippines for four and a half years before returning to Japan in 2016. He also works as a photographer and live-stream producer.



Mutsumi Tatsubo is the Chief Foreign News Editor for Jiji Press. He graduated from Kansai University and joined Jiji Press in 1987. He served as Vienna bureau correspondent (1994-1998), Washington bureau correspondent (1999-2002), Washington bureau chief (2013-2018), and Foreign News Editor from February 2018. He took on his present post in July 2019.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Birendre Jayathilake**, *Yoshimoto Kogyo Holdings Co., Ltd.*
- Marianna Sarkissova**, *Pace B.V.*
- Akihiko Kumaoka**, *Pace B.V.*
- Hiroyuki Shimada**, *Fuyoh Shipping Company*
- Kotaro Watanabe**, *Deloitte Tohmatsu Financial Advisory LLC*



Lens craft

From a distance . . .

The earth keeps revolving, oblivious to man's problems, and twice a year the famous "Diamond Fuji" —when the sun and Fuji align at sunset— still stuns . . .
by Bruce Osborn

. . . while not far away in Tokyo, the descending sun almost creates a "Diamond Tokyo Tower."
by Stirling Elmendorf

Keeping a distance . . .

Tape closes off the cherry blossoms in Ueno Park (Tokyo, March 28) to prevent *hanami*-party gatherings during the virus outbreak . . .
by Rodrigo Reyes Marin

. . . and a chef stands outside his restaurant in Tokyo hoping for customers, the day after the State of Emergency declaration on April 7.
by Tomohiro Ohsumi





The
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